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# LETTER DATED 17 FEBRUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you a statement issued by me on 10 February 1999, before the adoption of Security Council draft resolution S/1999/133 on the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Statement issued by the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations at the formal meeting of the Security Council on 10 February 1999

It has now been almost nine months since the Eritrean regime committed an act of aggression against Ethiopia and occupied Ethiopia's territory by force.

While fully recognizing its right, to which any sovereign country is entitled, to defend itself, Ethiopia nevertheless chose to seek a diplomatic solution to the crisis. Accordingly, as the Security Council knows full well, Ethiopia accepted peace proposals aimed at ending the dispute peacefully.

In particular, the Security Council is fully cognizant of Ethiopia's acceptance of the Framework Agreement as approved by the Central Organ Summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution on 17 December 1998 (S/1998/1223, annex), for which the Council, in its resolution 1226 (1999) of 29 January 1999 expressed full support, calling for its full implementation without delay.

It is common knowledge, and the Security Council knows this very well, that Eritrea has rejected virtually all peace proposals, and continues to create confusion by pretending that it remains engaged with the OAU process.

The facts speak for themselves. During the past nine months, there has never been a single occasion when the Eritrean regime was engaged positively and constructively in resolving peacefully the crisis between Eritrea and Ethiopia. On the contrary, it left no stone unturned to frustrate all peace endeavours, at all levels, inter alia, through its well-known ploys and tactics including the blackmailing of mediators.

During the past nine months, the Eritrean regime not only has consistently sabotaged and rejected all peace proposals, but also has carried out provocative military actions, in order to create an atmosphere of general crisis and to divert the attention of the international community from addressing the core issue, namely, Eritrean withdrawal from Ethiopian territory.

It is exactly for this reason that the Eritrean regime launched a large-scale military action, including the aerial bombing of the town of Adigrat, on 4, 5 and 6 February while the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General was in the region to persuade Eritrea to accept the OAU Framework Agreement. In this regard, I wish to draw the Security Council's attention to my letters of 4 and 5 February 1999, and their annexes (S/1999/115 and S/1999/119), in which I informed the President of the Council of these latest Eritrean military actions against Ethiopian military positions and civilian targets.

In light of these developments, under the circumstances and in view of Eritrea's continued acts of provocation, the Ethiopian Government had no option but to exercise its legitimate right of self-defence, as clearly stipulated in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Let me now comment briefly on the draft resolution before the Security Council.

My delegation welcomes the fact that the Security Council reaffirms its resolution 1226 (1999), in which it strongly urged Eritrea to accept the OAU Framework Agreement without delay.

I also welcome the fact that the Security Council has, once again, stressed that the OAU Framework Agreement remains a viable and sound solution for the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

However, we should also put on record our reservation in the strongest possible terms in respect of paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution S/1999/133.

While it is a well-known fact that Ethiopia is a victim of Eritrean aggression and that its territory has been illegally occupied by the use of force for over eight months now, and that, as a result, it is engaged in the exercise of the legitimate right of self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, it is patently contrary to the elementary principle and sense of justice to place the aggressor and the victim of aggression on the same footing and call for the cessation of arms sales to both countries.

In this connection, we should recall how Ethiopia was treated by the League of Nations back in 1936 when that organization imposed an arms embargo on both Fascist Italy and Ethiopia, knowing full well that Fascist Italy, the aggressor, was self-sufficient in respect of arms, while Ethiopia, a poor country, was trying to defend its sovereignty against a, at the time, major European power. History is repeating itself. It is well known that since Ethiopia does not, and would not, have any relations with rogue States, it has no arms supplies. The call for a cessation of arms sales to both Ethiopia and Eritrea when the latter's source of arms remains intact, being States whose commitment to international law is highly questionable at best, is in effect directed solely against law-abiding Ethiopia, a country without any source of arms supplies whatsoever.

Moreover, it is clear that Eritrea is a country with a long coastline, while Ethiopia is a landlocked country. It does not require any stretch of the imagination to see which country can continue to import arms and ammunition despite any call for cessation of arms sales to both countries. Again, paragraph 7 of the resolution is in the final analysis targeted against Ethiopia.

Let me conclude by stating that our infinite patience and readiness to cooperate with parties working for a peaceful resolution of the dispute, in spite of our being a victim of aggression, should not be mistaken for a slackening in our resolve to defend our sovereignty.

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